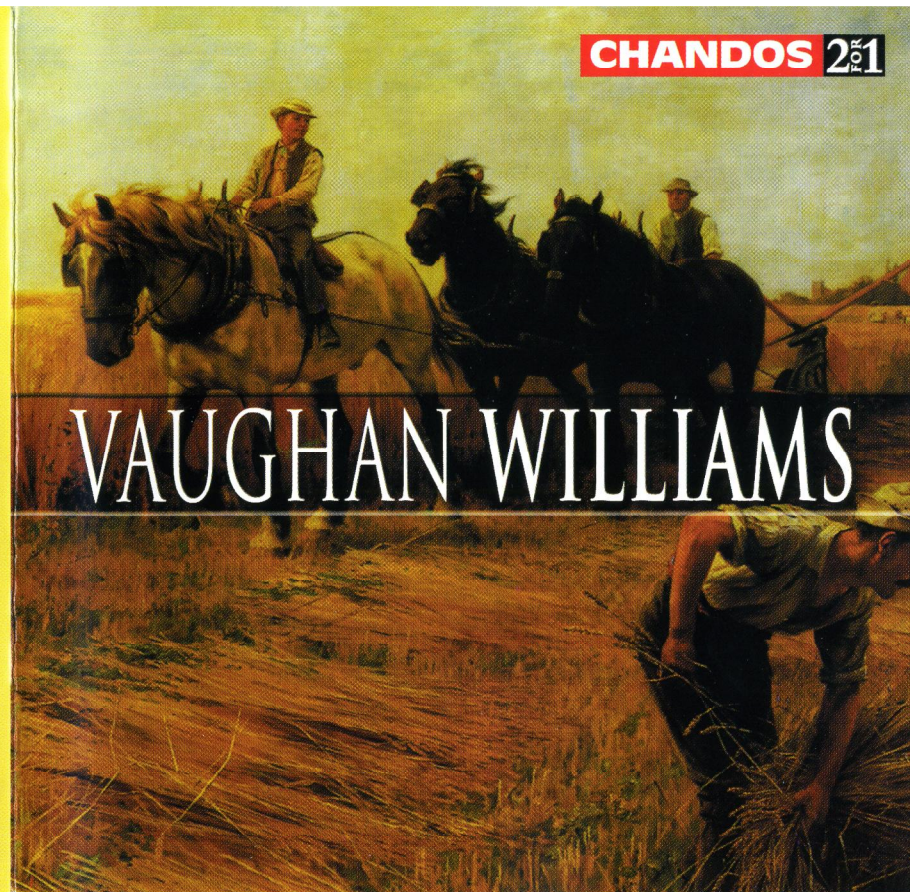


CHAN 241-9



## Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

COMPACT DISC ONE

1	<b>Overture: The Poisoned Kiss</b> §	6:45
	<b>Two Hymn-tune Preludes</b> §	7:53
2	1 Eventide	4:50
3	2 Dominus Regit me	3:00
4	<b>The Running Set</b> §	4:41
	<b>Flos campi</b> **†	20:57
5	I Lento (senza misura) –	2:38
6	II Andante con moto –	3:00
7	III Lento (senza misura) – Allegro moderato – Allargando –	3:36
8	IV Moderato alla marcia –	2:05
9	V Andate quasi lento –	3:19
10	VI Moderato tranquillo	6:18
	<b>Suite for viola and orchestra</b> †	25:33
	<i>Group 1</i>	
11	Prelude	3:12
12	Carol	2:42
13	Christmas Dance	1:45
	<i>Group 2</i>	
14	Ballad	5:45
15	Moto perpetuo	3:07
	<i>Group 3</i>	
16	Musette	3:44
17	Polka mélancholique	2:59
18	Galop	2:04

19	<b>Sea Songs</b> §	3:51
	Frederick Riddle viola*	
	Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir†	
	Bournemouth Sinfonietta	
	Norman Del Mar‡	
	George Hurst§	
		TT 70:02

COMPACT DISC TWO

1	<b>Overture: The Wasps</b>	10:13
	London Philharmonic Orchestra	
	Vernon Handley	
	orch. M. Johnstone	
	<b>Three Songs from <i>The House of Life</i></b>	12:34
2	1 Love-sight	4:12
3	2 Silent Noon	4:03
4	3 Heart's Haven	4:17
	Stephen Varcoe baritone	
	City of London Sinfonia	
	Richard Hickox	
	<b>Six Studies in English Folksong</b>	8:36
5	1 Adagio	1:50
6	2 Andante sostenuto	1:16



7	3	Larghetto –	1:38
8	4	Lento	1:40
9	5	Andante tranquillo	1:22
10	6	Allegro vivace	0:46
		Janet Hilton clarinet Keith Swallow piano	
11		<b>Romance</b>	6:40
		Tommy Reilly harmonica Academy of St Martin in the Fields Neville Marriner	
12		<b>Linden Lea</b> (arr. A. Somervell)	2:19
		Huddersfield Choral Society Brian Kay	
13		<b>Fantasia on Greensleeves</b> (arr. R. Greaves)	4:12
		BBC Philharmonic Vernon Handley	
14		<b>Serenade to Music</b>	10:39
		London Philharmonic Orchestra Vernon Handley	
			TT 55:43

## Vaughan Williams

### Overture: The Poisoned Kiss

*The Poisoned Kiss* is a 'Romantic Extravaganza' with spoken dialogue, written by Evelyn Sharp (sister of the folk-song collector, Cecil, whom Vaughan Williams had known from his early years), adapted from a story by Richard Garnett. Composed between 1927 and 1929 and subsequently revised on three occasions, the work – scored for twelve soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra – was first heard at Cambridge in May 1936. The head of the score contains the following note by the composer: 'The audience is requested not to refrain from talking during the overture. Otherwise they will know all the tunes before the opera begins.'

© Malcolm Walker

### Two Hymn-tune Preludes

Early work on selecting and composing tunes for *The English Hymnal* in 1906, with which Vaughan Williams brought about a recovery from the worst excesses of Victorian hymnody, did not exclude an interest in some examples of the older *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861), two of them in particular eliciting an instrumental response from Vaughan Williams. The first, 'Eventide', is by W.H. Monk

(1823–1889) being marked *Lento sostenuto* in G major with the second, 'Dominus regit me', by J.B. Dykes (1823–1876) and marked *Andante con moto* in B flat. Both works were composed in 1936 and scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn and strings.

© Noël Goodwin

### The Running Set

This work is founded on traditional dance tunes, and dates from 1933. A note on the score by the composer reads:

The Running Set is a dance of British origin still performed in the remoter parts of the United States. When Cecil Sharp discovered it some years ago it had already lost its proper tune, if it ever had one, and was danceable to any appropriate tune or even to the mere thrumming of the bow on the fiddle. When Sharp introduced the dance into this country he used for it several traditional tunes from the British Isles which have since become closely connected with it. A few years ago a massed performance of the dance was arranged for the annual festival of the English Folk Dance Society. For this purpose several of the tunes were combined to make one continuous movement...

The tunes incorporated into this work are 'Barrack Hill', 'The Blackthorn Stick', 'Irish Reel' and 'Cock o' the North'.

© Malcolm Walker

### Flos campi

The first performance of *Flos campi* was conducted by Sir Henry Wood at Queen's Hall, London, in 1925. The small orchestra consists of single woodwind, horn, trumpet, harp, celesta, two percussion and strings. With the solo viola and the instrumental use of the wordless chorus, it is a unique combination utterly suited to a work which is one of the most original in Vaughan Williams's entire output.

*Flos campi* (literally 'Flower of the Fields'), as the composer pointed out, is in reality the Vulgate, or Latin Bible, equivalent of 'Rose of Sharon'. Each of the six movements, which are played without break, is headed by a quotation from that strange love poem in the Old Testament, the *Song of Solomon*. The quotations were, at the first performance, printed only in the Vulgate version, but realizing that they were not generally understood, Vaughan Williams subsequently added the English Biblical texts as well (and these latter are quoted below). In doing so, he tartly remarked, after the first performance: 'The Biblical source of the quotations (also

gave rise to the idea that the music had an ecclesiastical basis. This was not the intention of the composer.' It has to be remembered that Vaughan Williams was by no means a conventionally religious man – his widow has referred in her biography to his 'cheerful agnosticism' – and clearly it was the intensely sensuous aspect of the texts which fired his imagination and not the various religious or spiritual allegories which scholars have attempted to read into the *Song of Solomon*.

I. 'As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters... Stay with me flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.' (Note: the last few words are totally misleading today: the New English translation, 'faint with love', gives the meaning correctly.)

The bare, bitonal opening for oboe and solo viola, is startlingly original and must have been found 'difficult' by early audiences. After a few bars and a silent pause, the viola and flute, alone in octaves, play a brooding theme which recurs in later movements. From this quiet intensity the music grows in volume to the first impassioned entry of the chorus, then fades into:

II. 'For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.'

The opening is mostly for chorus and strings, very soft, until the solo viola enters

with a typical serene Vaughan Williams tune in G major, *cantabile*. This is later sung by the chorus, with an additional colour provided by the celesta towards the end of the movement, which is joined by a viola cadenza to:

III. 'I sought him whom my soul loveth, but I found him not... "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love..." Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.'

The movement, mainly for the female section of the chorus, is interspersed with free passages for solo viola.

IV. 'Behold his bed (palanquin), which is Solomon's three score valiant men are about it... They all hold swords, being expert in war.'

A complete contrast to all that has gone before, which has mainly moved in slow tempi and with smooth phrasing, this movement follows vividly the quotation above by being cast in the form of a march, clear-cut rhythmically and oriental in flavour. A second theme, still brisk, is heard on the solo viola and later combines with the initial march tune. This is an instrumental movement with the chorus participating only in the last few bars.

V. 'Return, return, O Shulamite! Return, return that we may look upon thee... How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O Prince's daughter.'

Starting with a short, passionate burst of sound, the music settles into a slow dance, with a prominent background of recurring rhythms on the tabor (a small drum, of ancient origin) and much passage work in the viola's higher register. In the course of this fairly extended movement, the mood becomes more agitated (with a reference to two themes from the first movement). But it closes peacefully with a foretaste (solo bassoon followed by a solo horn) of the D major theme which forms the basis of the final movement:

VI. 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart.'

This theme is heard first on solo viola and then on solo oboe. It is of heart-warming simplicity – one of Vaughan Williams's unique great tunes, treated without elaboration whether it is set chordally in triads, or gently woven contrapuntally. Just before the end, however, there is an interesting reminder of the uneasy bitonal opening of the whole work, as before on oboe and viola. But after only a few bars, the peaceful fulfilment of the D major theme returns, settings its seal, as it were, upon the whole work.

### Suite for viola and orchestra

The first performance of this Suite was conducted by Malcolm Sargent in 1934 at the Queen's Hall, London. It is a splendidly attractive vehicle for the viola soloist. One would have said that it is the sort of work

that wrote itself but that, curiously, is not so. Vaughan Williams remarked to a friend in 1933: 'My viola suite is not finished – I do not know if it ever will be.'

It is divided into three Groups, of three, two, and three pieces.

Group 1's Prelude opens with a dignified, somewhat neo-classical figure in running semiquavers for the soloist, leading to a 9/8–3/4 section of a more traditionally English character, and the two flavours are briefly mixed.

The *Carol* is a simple, appealing tune played by the solo viola above flutes and clarinets. It flows in uneven bar lengths (i.e. 4/5–5/4) which impart a free, quasi-improvised feeling to it.

The third piece in this Group is a *Christmas Dance*, opening resolutely with viola chords and with a mixture of 3/4 and 6/8 rhythms. It is altogether a tuneful, easy-going movement.

Group 2 consists of two rather lengthier pieces. The main theme of the *Ballad* is announced by the solo viola over muted strings. A short middle section, slightly faster, opens with a 6/8 oboe solo of a folk-dance character – an interlude before the *Ballad* proper returns.

The next movement is the work's show-piece for the soloist, a *Moto perpetuo*, which never lets up – the viola plays continuously in semiquavers with passages of double

(occasionally triple) stopping and a certain amount of cross-rhythm let into the basic 3/8 scheme: ability of the first order is needed here.

Group 3 opens with a *Musette*, muted viola solo playing over a pattern of lower muted strings and harp. With a change of key (E flat to G) a genial second theme ensues. On the return of the first section, a delicate additional piece of colouring is provided by the accompaniment to the soloist – celesta and harp harmonics. The next piece is called *Polka mélancolique*. Why the title is in French is unclear and in any event the title is an odd one, since the piece is not especially melancholy and not strongly marked by the polka rhythm as commonly understood. But it is a rhythmic piece in a down-to-earth manner, ending softly, however, with a short cadenza for the solo viola.

The opening of the final *Galop* has a distinct East European flavour, as it were an *allegro barbaro* of Bartók (not the only example of a piece of Vaughan Williams to show an affinity with the Hungarian composer). But a more obviously native spirit asserts itself in the following 6/8 section, even though it is marked *feroce*. A short cadenza concludes this finale, a highly effective and vigorous ending to an unproblematic work.

© Alan Frank

### Sea Songs

*Sea Songs*, is a quick march originally written for military band in 1923, which the composer transcribed for orchestra in 1942. The score, which is based upon three naval tunes – 'Princess Royal', 'Admiral Benbow' and 'Portsmouth' – was very probably first heard at the British Empire Exhibition in April 1924.

© Malcolm Walker

### Overture: The Wasps

After study in London, Vaughan Williams travelled to Paris for lessons with Ravel in order to acquire some 'French polish' as he put it. There was also his abiding interest in English folk song, which led him to go into the country collecting tunes. All these strands of his life were demonstrated in his compositions, and by the time he was asked by the Greek Play Committee at Cambridge to write the incidental music for a performance of Aristophanes's comedy *The Wasps*, in 1909, he had already created a significant body of work, including the song-cycles *On Wenlock Edge* and *Songs of Travel*. Contenting himself with displaying the immense humour of the play, in his own very down-to-earth terms, Vaughan Williams created music which is at one with the play. Whilst we seldom hear the incidental music today, the Overture has

always proved to be a winning curtain-raiser in the concert hall.

Commencing with the angry buzzing of wasps, the sound of which becomes more ludicrous with the various changes of orchestral colour, the Overture begins with a jaunty tune punctuated by comic ejaculations from cymbals and bass drum. The progress of the music is straightforward and, after a dreamy middle section, Vaughan Williams combines all his ideas, and a rollicking mood prevails to the end.

© Robert Anthony Briggs

### The House of Life

Vaughan Williams first made his name with a number of songs, several of which were published in *The Vocalist*, a journal which lasted from 1902 to 1905. 'Silent Noon', the second song of the Pre-Raphaelite cycle *The House of Life* was first performed in 1903 and quickly became well known. The remainder of the songs probably date from the same year and they appeared as a cycle in 1904 with the composer Sir Hamilton Harty as the piano accompanist. The orchestration, by the composer and BBC administrator Maurice Johnstone (1900–1976) dates from 1968.

© Lewis Foreman



### Six Studies in English Folksong

Flanked by *Hugh the Drover* (1924) and *Sir John in Love* (1929), Vaughan Williams's *Six Studies in English Folksong* are frequently overlooked. Their neglect is unaccountable. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the collection of folk melodies from the mouths of elderly country people had fascinated Vaughan Williams ('If you can get the words, the Almighty sends you a tune,' replied a retired Essex farmworker in 1903; how, Vaughan Williams had asked him, had he come across these melodies?). Also, Vaughan Williams had recently published two highly successful anthologies – the *Oxford Book of Carols and Songs of Praise*, in which, he proudly declared, many tunes came from traditional sources; there was not, he continued, a single melody contained in the latter collection of which he was ashamed. He made several arrangements, and continued to use folk music as the basis for several medium-sized works; one of these was the set of studies recorded here. Or perhaps 'reflections' is a better description of these fresh and gentle pieces, each occupying just two pages of piano score, for none is an exact transcription of an identifiable folk song. Instead, each is founded on a strophic melody with more than a passing resemblance to a type of folk melody. The origins of the studies have been identified thus: (1.) 'Lovely on the Water'; (2.) 'Spurn Point'; (3.) 'Van Diemen's

Land'; (4.) 'She Borrowed Some of her Mother's Gold'; (5.) 'The Lady and the Dragoon'; (6.) 'As I walked over London Bridge'. The first and third studies are modal in harmony, while the concluding *Allegro vivace* is the only extrovert study of the set, with something rather Holstian in the left-hand ostinato quaver accompaniment halfway through; both composers held folk music dear. The Studies received their first performance at London's Scala Theatre on 4 June, 1926 as part of the English Folk Dance Society Festival. On that occasion, the cellist May Mukle (the dedicatee) was partnered by her sister Anne, and Vaughan Williams quickly published alternative versions of the solo part for violin, viola and – as recorded here – clarinet.

© Andrew Keener

### Romance

The Vaughan Williams *Romance* is probably the most familiar and popular piece for harmonica and is here given a definitive performance by Tommy Reilly.

© Robert Farnon

### Linden Lea & Fantasia on Greensleeves

These two short items show Vaughan Williams's great love of folk songs. In fact, many people assume that his part-song

*Linden Lea* is an arrangement of a folk melody, even though it is an original song which simply shows a strong allegiance to that tradition. The orchestral *Fantasia on Greensleeves* was written originally as an interlude in his opera *Sir John in Love* and it cleverly combines the tune of 'Greensleeves' with another folk melody called 'Lovely Joan'. If you are looking for the perfect musical picture of the English countryside in high summer, this is it!

© Brian Kay

### Serenade to Music

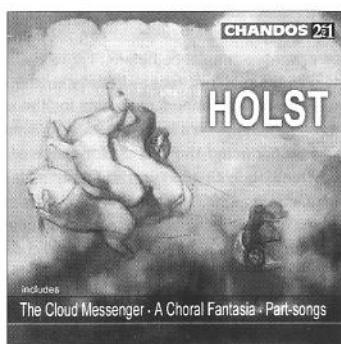
The year after the production of *The Wasps*, Vaughan Williams shook the English musical world with his *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, and in the ensuing twenty-eight

years before the premiere of the *Serenade to Music* he wrote many of the works by which he is best remembered: *Five Mystical Songs*, *The Lark Ascending*, *Flos campi*, *Sancta Civitas*, *Five Tudor Portraits*, the first four Symphonies, two ballets (including *Job*), and four operas.

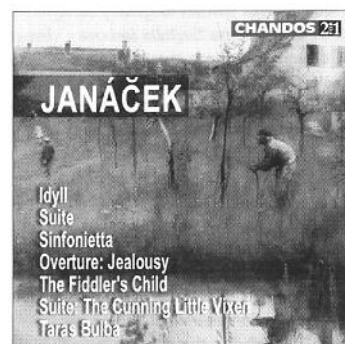
*Serenade to Music* was originally written for sixteen solo singers and orchestra for the golden jubilee of Sir Henry Wood, and it was he who conducted the first performance of it at a Promenade Concert in the Queen's Hall on 5 October 1938. The text is drawn from the first scene of the last act of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, and with or without the text the music is a lyrical evocation of a summer's evening.

© Robert Anthony Briggs

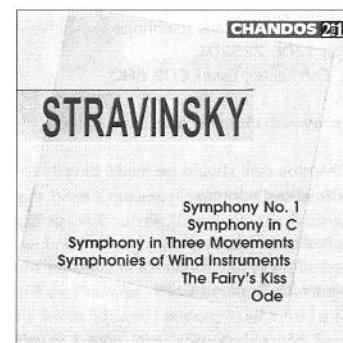
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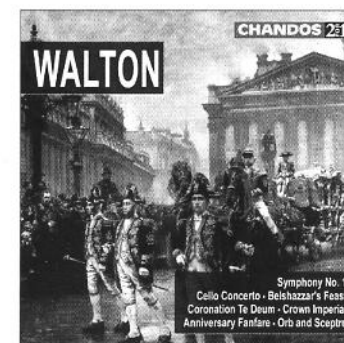
**Holst**  
 The Cloud Messenger  
 Hymn of Jesus  
 Ave Maria  
 A Choral Fantasia  
 A Dirge for Two Veterans  
 Ode to Death  
 Part-songs  
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 Suite for Strings  
 Sinfonietta  
 Overture: Jealousy  
 The Fiddler's Child  
 Suite: The Cunning Little Vixen  
 Taras Bulba  
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**Stravinsky**  
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 Symphony in C  
 Ode  
 Symphony in Three Movements  
 Symphonies of Wind Instruments  
 The Fairy's Kiss  
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The recording of *Flos campi*, the *Suite for viola and orchestra* and *Hymn-tune Prelude No. 1 'Eventide'* were sponsored by Harveys of Bristol. The recording of the *Romance* is courtesy of the Decca Record Company Ltd and released by arrangement with Sigmund Green.

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**Producers** Brian Culverhouse (*Overture: The Poisoned Kiss, Hymn-tune Preludes, The Running Set & Sea Songs*), Brian Couzens (*Overture: The Wasps, Six Studies & Serenade to Music*), Tim Oldham (*House of Life Songs*), Chris Hazell (*Romance*) & Ralph Couzens (*Linden Lea & Fantasia on Greensleeves*)

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VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

**CHANDOS** DIGITAL

2-disc set **CHAN 241-9**

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**Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)**

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*featuring*

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